

(Copied from manuscript of Sister M. Josephine Barber)

### The Founding of our House in Kaskaskia.

On April 17th (1833) (Easter Wednesday, I think) we left Georgetown.

The following are the names of the Sisters of the foundation:

Mother M. H. Agnes Brent Superior

Sr. M. Genevieve King, Assistant & Mistress of Nov.

Sr. M. Gonzaga Jones, Procuratrix, dispenser etc.

Sr. M. Ambrosia Cooper

Sr. M. Helen Flannigan, Directress of the School.

Sr. Isabella King, Teacher, Sacristan, Robier etc.

Sr. M. Josephine Barber, Postulant.

Sr. Catharine Rose Murray, Lay Sr., Cook etc.

The Sisters traveled under the protection of Mr. Richard Queen, a Catholic gentleman, & Brother-in-law to Sr. Genevieve.

On reaching Baltimore we had the honor of dining with Abp. Whitfield; & after dinner he, with Frs. Chance & Deluoll showed us their grounds, their beautiful Calvary where Fr. Wheeler was buried; his grave being surmounted by a monument, & as well as I can recollect, a marble bust of the deceased.

Having visited the Cathedral, Seminary etc. we drove to the Carmelites who were delighted to see the Daughters of Abp. Leonard Neale, brother to their Founder, Fr. Charles Neale, & gave us a hearty welcome. There were some among them who had known Mother Agnes in Port Tobacco. She was then a little child; & used to visit them in company with her mother. One of these ancient nuns, Sr. Teresa of Jesus (Juliette Sewell) was that very day, celebrating her golden jubilee; & the convent was in a state of joyful festivity. We remained all night with these dear Sisters; & intended taking the early morning train for Frederick, which was then the national route, but they detained us for dinner & we did not leave until the afternoon. Here for the first time, we saw the rail road & the cars: not steam cars, such as they now have, but drawn by



horses. On reaching Frederick, we were met at the depot by Fr. Barber, S.J. father of our postulant, & also had the pleasure of seeing Fr. McElroy (S.J.) who died in the summer of 1877 aged 95.

The next day we began the ascent of the mountains, in four-horse coaches. After some four or five days travel on the Alleghanies, we took the steam boat at Wheeling & arrived at Louisville on Saturday in time to go to Confession to the saintly Bp. Flaget. Next morning we went to holy Communion, assisted at high Mass in the Cathedral, & in the afternoon at Benediction. Bp. Flaget, Rev. Mr. Able & Mother Catharine (of the white-cap Srs. of Charity) accompanied us through the locks of the Canal. Fr. Able gave us a very gloomy description of Kaskaskia, telling us we "would all die of pleurisy the first winter,"—which was not very far from the truth. (On the following Friday, May 3rd, the Finding of the H. Cross, —we rose about 3 or 4 o'clock; the Capt. having decided to put us out, not on the Illinois shore, (where there was no house for accommodation & no conveyance to be found) but at St. Mary's landing in Missouri.) The steam-boat stopped opposite Mrs. Davis's residence, which we had been told, was a tavern. Mr. Queen ordered breakfast just as he would have done at a hotel. While we were at table Mrs. D. politely informed us that hers was a private residence: that she indeed frequently entertained the priests who came & went to Perryville (the Lazarists Seminary) for whom the boats occasionally stopped at her landing; but seldom on any others business. Mr. Queen and the Sisters apologized.

(We were now in a dilemma. The broad Mississippi rolled between us & our destination. We were not even in the State of Illinois; & had no acquaintances in the country.

About 8 o'clock Mr. Queen departed for Kaskaskia to announce our arrival & to see what preparations had been made for our accommodation. He returned after dinner saying that nothing at all had been done, & that the inhabitants were not expecting us, although some time previous Bp. Rosatti, on a visit there, had mentioned his intention of establishing a Convent & boarding school in their town.

Mother Agnes was very much surprised at all this, as before leaving



Georgetown, she had been led to understand that not only was a house provided but that the parish priest had proposed & arranged for surrendering to us his own dwelling; which being contiguous to the church would allow of our choir opening into the sanctuary--These probably were plans concerted between Bp. Rosatti & the parish priest, & mentioned by the Bishop in his letters to Georgetown. But they were plans that never were & never could be carried into effect; as both the Church & presbytery were in too dilapidated a condition; the presbytery containing moreover only two or three rooms.

Whatever may have been the origin of this idea, it was one fully entertained in Georgetown; insomuch that Rev. Wm. Matthews said to Mother Agnes jocosely: "If you have turned the priest out of his house already, I do not know what you will do after your arrival in Kaskaskia."

When Mr. Queen contradicted all these expectations, describing Kaskaskia as a poor "miserable", "out of the way" little place, the Sisters were quite discouraged & wanted to go back: & had it not been for M. Agnes & Sr. Gonzaga, undoubtedly would have returned to Georgetown. Srs. Helen, Isabella & Rose wept much: but M. Agnes & Sr. G. remained steadfast.

In the afternoon our baggage, boxes, trunks, etc., were put on the flatboat, (called also "the ferry boat") & served us for seats in crossing over to the Illinois shore. The boat was so heavily laden that the water came up, almost to the edge: & Srs. H. I. A. and R. were so frightened that they sat speechless & I believe nearly trembling the whole way. Broad & muddy as the river was, the water could hardly be seen for the carpet of green caterpillars that covered (it). On landing, the shore & trees were in the same predicament; whereat the Srs. expressed their astonishment. It almost exceeded credibility. Three vehicles there awaited us. They were the Kaskaskia stage coaches; but in size & shape, like our ordinary milk wagons.

The Kaskaskia parish priest (our future confessor) Mr. Condamine was there on horseback. We were soon seated, & in a few minutes on our way to Kaskaskia. Our drivers announced that the town was in sight--We strained our eyes but could not find it--Thinking to settle on the exact locality, we asked: Where was the church? A log structure was pointed out; but we did not give our informant credit,



& felt sure that the log edifice was a barn & not a church. Far from suspecting that we were in the midst of the town, we were still on the look out for it, when our carriages stopped in front of Mr. Wm. Morrison's elegant stone mansion, the only real building in the place. The others were low erections of frame or logs, one or two stories at most, & concealed from view by the trees. One street intersected the village: & that so quiet, & we may say unfrequented, as almost never to be disturbed by the sound of carts or wheels. "Asleep or paralyzed" writes Fr. Doherty, "K. lies in the Illinois Bottom, with all the lazy apathy of the Indian, whose home it once was, dreaming over its past, & its prospects that are no more. No press, no rail road, no mill, no smoke of manufacture rising to the blue sky; no bridge, -- only a flat-boat drawn wearily by a rope from shore to shore of the Okaw (Kaskaskia) river. Why! a visitor there would almost think he lived two centuries back."

Alighting at Mr. Wm. Morrison's, his wife & sister-in-law received us most graciously. The latter was a convert, a lady of remarkable intelligence & extensive information, who having dissipated the prejudices of her relatives, easily induced them to offer us hospitality until our own house could be prepared. Theirs was a double house & very roomy, though only of two stories & an attic. The entire second story was appropriated to our use. We had two large & one small bed room, besides the ball room which ran the entire width of the house, over the parlors, but no one slept in this, nor was it any longer used for its original purpose, it being deemed unsafe on account of a fissure in the wall caused by the earthquake of 1811; since which time, Kaskaskia having rapidly depopulated, had little call for large ball rooms or brilliant assemblies. The Sisters used to walk thru to recite their office, etc. On the first evening of our arrival we remarked that the parlor floors were not perfectly level, but wavy. Madam William informed us that this as well as the rent in the east wall had been occasioned by the earthquake. Her husband gave us the particulars above stated, with many others that I cannot now recall. It was then that we learned from the inhabitants of the curse that had been put upon the place. There was no one in Kaskaskia & no one who had ever been there, who did not know it well: but Madam R. Morrison told us she had heard some say, & hoped



it was true, that K. was cursed, only for a certain number of years, & that the term of its malediction being now expired, it would revive from its long period of calamity & misery. Subsequent events seem to show the contrary — sickness, floods, earthquakes, still desolate the beautiful but forsaken spot.

On Saturday, May 4th we were visited by the elite of the town, & among others by Lawyer Baker, who, as was afterwards told us, was generally deputed by the townsfolks as an inspector or examiner into the qualifications of those who presented themselves for teachers in their little village; which by the by (exclusive of the Creole race) contained a very select & well educated class.

Lawyer Baker had a long interview with Sr. Helen, the directress of the school, was very much pleased, & gave a favorable report of her education & acquirements. She had at the time, no idea of the object of his visit, or possibly she might have, from embarrassment, succeeded less well.

Mr. Morrison's large & beautiful garden adjoined the Catholic grave yard that lay at the back of the church, so that we could go to Mass or visit the Bd. Sacrament without passing into the street. On Sunday we went to high Mass; & Rev. Mr. Condamine who preached in french, explained to the congregation the purport of our coming & the benefit that would accrue to their children from Catholic training & instruction.

On Monday we began to prepare our own house. It was a store belonging to Col. P. Menard, & lent to us by him free of rent. He had the counters and shelves taken down; & intended to have it converted into convent shape, with conventual entrance & grate. Meantime the carpenter made our altar & tabernacle, which we lined and trimmed handsomely. Having been told in Georgetown that we would not need a separate altar, the Sisters came entirely unprovided; but in the course of a week we got every thing ready & were able to move into our own house, where Mass was celebrated the second Sunday after our arrival. We also had Benediction in the afternoon & the Sisters sang. Madam R. Morrison & some other ladies were present & were enchanted with the music; for our Sisters had very fine voices & sang in two or three parts. Fr. Condamine gave us Mass



four times a week; on Sundays saying two Masses, one for the congregation & one for us. He also lent us a few vestments until we could obtain a supply. Donations of all kinds were pouring in from our friends. Provisions, beds, blankets, culinary utensils, etc. They also gave us a chair apiece, which until benches could be made, we carried up & down from the choir to the refectory, & thence to the assembly. There was no market in town, although there was a butcher who had not much custom, as nearly every family raised & killed its own beef & mutton, dividing any over-plus with some one or two neighbors, who in their turn did the same. We were well supplied by Mrs. Wm. & Robt. Morrison, who, until we were settled, sent us nearly every morning, hot waffles or cakes for breakfast; for their residences being just opposite our house, they constantly sent us aid of every description. Their negro men & women were always at our service when needed, even making our academy fires in the winter; scrubbing, cutting & hauling wood, hauling water from the river every Monday morning for our laundry. In this indian country it was customary for those who could afford it, to place a canoe under the eaves of the house to catch rain water; & when this was not filled by the rain, to supply by hauling water from the Okaw river. Mr. Wm. Morrison's men always filled our canoe every Monday, & this they continued to do as long as he lived, which was about five or six years. During the first winter we bought no wood at all. He & his brother kept us supplied & sent their negroes to cut it. Not a day passed that Mr. Wm. Morrison did not come to our house & walk around the premises to see if any thing was wanting. He gave us, at first one, then two cows, a sheep, hogs, chickens, & sent corn & hay with which to feed them. He also gave us a large stove for the childrens refectory, & a comfortable Franklin. For our library he made us a present of many books; Lingards England in six or eight volumes, "The British Poets" in twenty-four vols. The old & new Testament in some thirty vols. & several other works. He made us a present of a piano & guitar, several nice desks, tables, wash stands & about a dozen pair of shoes that had been left when he broke up keeping store, a few years previous.

Col. Menard who lived on the other side of the Okaw (Kaskaskia) river was



no less generous. He kept a carpenter & had him to make each of the Sisters a bedstead with tester & a table. He gave our sacristy a nice vesting stand; had a weaver in his employ to knit, I should say, weave us, thirty two prs. of stockings; two woolen & two cotton pairs apiece for each Sr. He often brought us himself a basket of squabs, attended to all our business, or had his agents to do it as for his own.

But the store he had lent us gratis, & from which he had removed all the conveniences, counters shelves etc., proving too small, we had to look out for other quarters. The old Kaskaskia hotel, now standing open & vacant was recommended to us & offered gratis; but seemed in too ruinous a condition. It wanted much repair. The old window sashes being decayed & many of the panes wanting, we had blind windows of solid wood substituted. These were made to bolt or button on, covering only the lower sash, & were removed in hot & dry weather. A hail storm occurring, we could not afford to replace the glass, but put in "blind lights" where the panes were broken.

Yet we were delighted with our new quarters, into which we moved about June 1st having spent one week at Mr. Wm. Morrison's & nearly three at Col. Menard's store.

When we reached the old hotel, the sign was still swinging to two tall posts in front; but we had it cut down. It had served in Kaskaskia's happier days. We also had the counter and balustrade removed from the bar room which was in future to serve the triple purpose of refectory, play room, & class room for the children. A large livery stable was also on the premises, & was very useful for our cows, hogs & poultry.

(sketch of floor plan in manuscript)

Plan of the old Kaskaskia hotel, built in 1750.

1st floor — 6 rooms.

The hall & bar room were about 30 feet square. A piazza, ascended by 4 steps ran along the front. There was also a back piazza leading to the kitchen. Under the kitchen was a cellar. The four small rooms were about 15 x 12 feet. The 2nd floor was a half story with dormer windows front & back, & two large windows at the



gable end. It was as long but not as wide as the 1st floor.

(sketch of the outside of the building)

The ball room we converted into our chapel: one side for the Sisters, the other for the children. The N.W. corner was the sacristy—with vesting stand etc.

The altar stood between the two west end windows. We had a grated partition put up in the hall, opposite the front door—but the piazza was our parlor.

No. 1 was the procuratrix's office, where she slept.

No. 2 had no fire place & was a provision room where barrels of flour, sugar, tea, coffee, & also the bread were kept. It opened into No. 1

No. 3 was the children's wardrobe & music room

No. 4 a music room.

No. 2 was for some months the Srs. Refectory.

The townsfolk, & especially the Morrison and Menard families were highly gratified at seeing us so comfortably located; & immediately placed their daughters at our school.

Mr. Wm. Morrison had four daughters. Col. Menard had an only daughter, & a progeny of grand-daughters & nieces whom he educated, & who, learning nearly all the extras, were very profitable. He likewise procured us patronage among his friends & agents in St. Louis & the country around; & but for him & the Morrison families we could not have remained in Kaskaskia. This daughter wishing to learn the harp (as well as the piano) he purchased her an instrument which he allowed us to use for our school, & finally gave to the Srs.

When we first arrived in Kaskaskia there was no piano in the town; & many of the inhabitants had never seen one. Mr. Morrison younger daughters were of this number. (the oldest, Mary Morrison having been East) Our piano was a real curiosity. All the children of the town, & many grown persons came to see & hear it. We had as many pupils as we could teach, & parents were much pleased with their progress & performance. We got up a pretty good choir; & in the course of a year or two were requested to lend its services to the parish church for Christmas & Easter, which we did. Our best piano was conveyed through the town & served instead of an organ: for melodions were almost unheard of in those days.



Miss Sophie Menard played & the youthful choir sang their best, in several parts, to the great gratification of the Congregation as well as of its holy pastor, Father Condamine, & especially of Col. Menard & Mr. Morrison.

One day we asked "Aunt Hagar," an aged negress whom we hired, whether they had had high Mass at the parish: "Not only high Mass," said she, "but very high Mass." This old woman at first a Methodist & very prejudiced, became a fervent convert, & gave herself to us; telling all who made enquiries, that she "had ~~joined~~ joined the Srs." She lived to be over a hundred, a model of all virtues; & lived & died most holily.

But to resume the description of our hotel. The windows looking onto the front piazza were large & near the ground. One Sunday our lady friends came while we were at vespera, & as they could both see & hear us from the front, would not ring the bell, not wishing to disturb our devotions. What did they do but get noiselessly into the windows of the east room & remain there quietly until vespera was over. On our quitting the chapel they greeted us most cheerfully, telling us how they had effected an entrance, & why.

Some of those ladies had danced in that ballroom in years gone by; & I think they said with Gen. Lafayette himself. At least they were at the grand dinner given in his honor in 1826. I recollect hearing Mr. Wm Morrison say that on meeting Lafayette, he had, on exchanging with him the "Free Masons" signal, received a warm shake hands. From a late <sup>number</sup> ~~number~~ of the "St. Louis Globe Democrat," I extract the following.

"Near the centre of the town of Kaskaskia was the home of Wm Morrison, built in 1798, of stone hauled from the ruins of Ft. Chartres, seventeen miles above. It was at this house that the reception of Lafayette took place, & it was there that Helen Du Quoin, daughter of Louis Du Quoin, Chief of the Kaskaskians came forward in the midst of a grand ball & drawing from her bosom a letter written to her Father by Lafayette during the revolution, presented it to the marquis, who was sensibly affected by the incident. Wm Morrisons' house has long since gone to decay. A round lime stone pillar, standing at the corner of the streets, is all that is left to mark the spot. About seventy years ago a tragedy was enacted there, which made a great noise throughout the Western country. John Rice Jones, Jr., a nephew of Jno. Rice Jones, a Welch nobleman settled in Kaskaskia was standing on the street, with his elbow resting on the balcony of Robert Morrison's house, engaged in conversation with William Morrison, when Dr. Dunlap approached from behind & murdered him in cold blood. Dunlap escaped to Mexico, & was never brought to justice. Jones had just been elected Territorial Delegate to Congress by the Federalists, after an exciting canvass,



in an issue growing out of the confirmation of land claims. The murderer was said to be an instrument of the Commissioners."

The above Extract has led me a little beyond my subject. I will resume the description of our Hotel & premises.

As our number of boarders as well as of day scholars increased, we were again crowded for room, & found our Chapel especially, incommodiously situated.

At the far corner of the same square was another house, Mr. Mather's, which lay unoccupied. We rented it for fifty dollars a year. It was a gloomy looking place; but convenient for our purpose. We moved thither in the fall. And as it was some two hundred feet distant from the Academy, & the Sisters were necessitated to cross the square many times a day & in all weather, Mr. Wm. Morrison, solicitous for their health, had a double pathway made of long & thick logs; so that we could not only pass to & fro dry shod, but walk there two abreast for exercise & recreation whenever it was fine overhead. Mather's house now became the Convent. The hotel was designated as the "Academy". The ball room was converted to a use more congenial to its original purpose. It became the children's play-room; also their class room, study hall, dancing room, etc. Three or four classes were held in it daily.

(sketch of the floor plan of Mather's house is included)

In the Chapel, the altar was immediately opposite the choir door, which being thrown open, gave the Srs. a full view.

The children's apartment was on the other side, & afforded also a good view of the altar. There was a piano here.

The Choir, during the summer, served for prayer exclusively; but in the winter we had to make it our assembly room, novitiate, confessional & chapter room. We also had a piano here, which served for Benediction & for music lessons. The priest took his breakfast in this same room & through one corner of this same room ran the only staircase in the house - most of which was one story only.

A small yard with paling fence separated it from the street. Under the Chapel & Choir were very good cellars which we converted into the children's wardrobe, their first wardrobe (in the hotel) being needed for a music room.

The Turkey house was in the summer, converted into a refectory for the Srs.; but being only weather boarded, could not be used in winter.



The 2nd story consisted of three rooms only.

There was a very good garret.

#### Our first Christmas dinner

here was quite sumptuous. We invited Madam Menard, & in compliment to her dispensed with silence. She appeared to enjoy the fete; & as well as ourselves, was much amused to see the snow drizzling over our table, & forming here & there tiny piles, despite a high fire in the chimney place: for it was a bitter cold day.

Shortly afterwards we had the roof repaired. Another day the refectorian had brought over the dinner & set it before the fire to keep warm, while she went back to the kitchen (at the hotel) to get something else. As she approached the Refectory a dog rushed out with a hunk of meat in his mouth. She guessed what had too truly happened. He had eaten up all our dinner; & that day we had to dine on bread & molasses. The door of this old structure did not hang exactly straight, & had no latch or fastening but a bar, which was put up at night only: So that being ajar, the dog smelt the victuals, went and helped himself undisturbed.

After this we moved our refectory into the next apartment, (as marked in diagram) not so much on account of the lately sustained loss as because being necessitated to hire a washer woman & provide her a wash-house & lodging, we had to give her our old refectory. In the following summer we had the turkey house cleaned out; which being large, light & airy, was very pleasant for a dining room during the warm weather, but could not be used in winter, except for poultry.

During the first summer also, we used the loft of the livery stable as a carpenter's shop: for the kind Lazarists at Perryville (besides their great spiritual assistance)

(a sketch is included here showing the livery stable; Academy, hotel; and Mather's house, convent)

wishing to help us, sent an aged lay brother who was a carpenter, to make desks, benches, cupboards &c. He remained about six weeks, & rendered us great service. Mather's house was the convent proper, where the community lived, lodged & had their Conventual exercises, enjoying great quiet & retirement; in fact, real cloister life: for here the world scarcely intruded; the parlors being in the Academy.



During the course of the winter however they began to experience disturbance of another sort. Strange noises were heard, especially in the night. Firing of pistols, moving of furniture; heavy steps, as of men ascending the stairs. One night a loud rap came on the mantel near Sr. Isabella's bed, & at the same moment the light was blown out. Three or four of us slept in that same apartment & all heard & saw what I have stated. I was asleep; but the loud rap woke me: Sr. Isabella, knowing I was not afraid, called to me & I answered, but in a few minutes was asleep again: The others could not sleep for fear: & oftentimes sat up by the fire all, or nearly all night. Even in the day time we heard these noises. Once I was going up stairs, when the Invisible, in heavy silk robes, rustled close by me & passed down. I turned my head & gazed after the passer by with all my might: but nothing but the sound of the rustling silk was discernible. The foot fall was noiseless: & though the robe seemed so close as to touch me, I felt & saw nothing. There was no passage, even of the smallest size, in this house. One room opened into another, - & the single stairway of the whole dwelling (except that to the garret) led from the choir to the dormitory, having two doors, one at the top & one midway of said flight.

One evening during Complin we heard a heavy cannon ball roll across the floor overhead, & then thump heavily down three steps. The Sisters raised their eyes & exchanged glances; & Mother Agnes looking at the Sr. Infirmarian, signed to her to go up; for there was a sick Sister in bed. The infirmarian found her patient trembling with fright.

One morning I was giving a music lesson in this same room, when a tremendous rap came on the opposite wall behind us. My pupil turned her head & looked over towards the spot whence the sound proceeded; but I pretended not to notice it, & we said nothing.

Every night I used to hear a kind of clicking - an indescribable sound, something like the short chirp made by the turkey hen. It seemed to be very near my pillow: & occasionally something seemed to strike my pillow, like a heavy drop of water falling on it. I mentioned this in recreation, & Mother Agnes & the Sisters told me to speak & ask; "In the name of God who are you & what do you want?" Night came and



with it my preternatural visitant, whom in a loud voice, I interrogated according to orders: but receiving no answer said, as Mother A. had told me: "In the name of God depart !" It gave one click, & I heard no more of it that night.

The next day in recreation the Sisters were joking over what had passed. They had heard me speak in the night, & supposing I was holding colloquy with the ghost, lay still as mice in their beds, fearing to stir. But on being informed that although obedient to the word: "Depart !" the nocturnal visitant had not deigned to disclose the purport of his visit, they told me I had spoken too loud. "You must speak in a whisper," said they.

Next night I spoke in whispers, but with as little success. Yet when I whispered: "In the name of God, depart !" One click/<sup>came,</sup> & there was no more of it. Every night my ghost came & staid at my pillow as long as I chose to let him: ten, twenty, forty minutes more or less: but instantly & invariably obeyed at the words: "In the name of God, depart !"



I do not know whether our Sisters sleeping in the same & adjoining rooms made use of any such adjuration; but I know their health seemed seriously threatened from the consequences of fear & loss of sleep.

Fr. Timon (afterwards Visitor of the Lazarists & Bp. of Buffalo) who resided at the Barrans, used frequently to stop at our Convent, to see that all was well. He was also our extraordinary Confessor. I told him in confession, of these nocturnal noises, which he at first treated lightly, saying it might be owing to the state of my blood. "But Father," said I, "I am not at all afraid." "Even so," he replied, "it may be attributable to some, physical, natural cause." I assured him that Mother & all the Sisters heard & (all but Mother & myself) were harrassed with fear & want of rest. Then Fr. Timon said: "My child, it is a good sign. If the devil got what he wanted, inwardly, he would not have recourse to such outward disturbance." The next morning Fr. T. said Mass for we did not have Mass daily as there was only one priest in Kaskaskia, & took holy Communion to the sick Sister who slept in one of the haunted chambers. From that time forth we never heard any noise in the house.

I have said above that I was never frightened. Nor was I, by all or any of the noises: but at a time when there was nothing audible to excite fear, I was on retiring to rest, sensible of the overwhelming presence of some evil spirit or influence. I had recourse to prayer, to holy water, to the ~~sign~~ sign of the Cross. Nothing seemed to avail. I prayed to God that I ~~might~~ might not die of fear; for I actually apprehended that this invisible power would destroy soul & body. I do not think I ever mentioned this, even to my superior, for I am convinced that had I done so, obedience would have driven off & discomfited this dread & dark enemy. Bp. Timon told me it was obedience that banished him in the former case; when, at a weak word, said in a whisper he fled.

Bp. Rosatti had paid us several visits. He did not, on account of the cholera, meet us in Kaskaskia at our first arrival, fearing people might attribute his absence from St. Louis to a wrong cause; & say he "ran away from the cholera."

The Bishop brought with him a relic of St. Philomena. It was some of the



flax colored floss silk, which after the discovery of her bones, had been put upon the head of the martyr's wax image; & having been converted into real hair had grown miraculously. Particles & small locks cut from this, retained the same miraculous property: & the Bishop, who showed us his relic, assured us it had grown some inches since in his possession, & had been given him by a priest who cut it from a relic lock, at first less than an inch in length. Shortly afterwards the hair circled the little box in which it was kept; & finally fell over in a ringlet when the lid was raised. There was no glass to confine it: & all the Sisters saw, & I think touched the little ringlet.

Bp. R. said he wished St. Philomena to be one of the special patronesses of our Convent. About this same time we received from our Convent of Naples a box of devotional articles, containing, among others, many pictures of the young martyr saint. She was represented in a recumbent posture, leaning on cushions, & in her royal robes: a crown on her head, a lily in her hand, & the instruments of her martyrdom around. At first we valued these pictures but little; knowing nothing about the saint; but someone, I think it may have been Bp. R. —gave us a prayer or novena to her, with some account of her life etc.

At the time one of our pupils, a Miss Juliette James, (perhaps a descendant of the old J. B. St. James of 1790) was in deep consumption: I think nearly in the last stage. A hollow cough, a hectic flush on the cheeks, sunken eyes, & all the usual indications of consumption were visible. She was by no means fit to be at school; but did not wish to give up or to think herself so ill, although unable to keep up, & obliged to lie down daily. Sr. Isabella was constantly telling her to prepare for death, which seemed not many months off.

I gave her a copy of the novena, & thought no more about it until some ten or twelve days afterwards, looking at her I perceived the complexion of health on her hitherto cadaverous countenance. "Juliette," said I, "how are you? You are well!" "Yes," said she, "I am well." "No pain?" "None." "No cough?" "My cough has left me." "Good appetite?" "Yes." "Don't cough at night?" "I don't cough at all, night or day: I feel as well as ever I did in my life."



This was all perfectly true. Even her form was changed. The sunken chest & forward shoulders became full & erect, her complexion healthy, her step sprightly; & being now reckoned among the most robust in school, was during the following holy week selected as one of the watchers to take her station before the Bd. Sacrament on Holy Thursday night.

These pictures of St. Philomena were probably lost in the flood, as I have never seen any of them since. They were pretty large; about six by eight inches,—the engraving alone. Several of them were framed.

Madam Robert Morrison had never been baptized in the Catholic Church. Thinking that her protestant baptism had been good, & averse to a contrary idea, she objected to conditional baptism on the grounds of its seeming to be an admission that the first was invalid. The priest finding her so strong in this conviction told her if she was certain of the validity of the first, a repetition of it was not necessary. She had been a Catholic probably a year or two, when we came out West; & that same summer, she, one Sunday morning, wrote to Mother Agnes the following note, the original of which is still in our possession.

Dear Mother Agnes,

Beloved Mother,

I have something strange to relate, but you must not fail to believe the truth of what I shall describe. About midnight I awoke praying, under the strong impression that oil had been poured upon my face. As soon as I was perfectly awake, supposing I had had a dream, I applied my hand to the part of my face, where in sleep, I had the impression that the oil had touched me, when to my utter astonishment, I found a quantity of something like oil lying on my cheek. I was not alarmed, but commenced praying with more fervor; continually saying to God that I knew a miracle had taken place. My hands were glued together; & whenever I moved a stream flowed from them. I awoke Mr. Morrison & told him to feel my hands. He was silent at first, as if surprised. I then asked him how they felt? He said: "As though anointed with thick cream." I told him to get a candle immediately. Some time elapsed before one was obtained. Matilda (a young negress) brought it. I told her to feel my hands & state what they felt like. She said they were covered with honey & shone like glass."



My mind was very composed & sweet; nor did I sustain the least fear.

You may rely upon the truth of this statement. Mr. Morrison can confirm it. What conclusion arises in your mind, dearest Mother?

The next morning Mrs. Morrison had recourse to Rev. Fr. Condamine to know what might be the signification of this singular phenomenon. She showed him her hands still retaining the unction, which, when raised to the light shone transparently between the fingers as honey might: yet without any unpleasant sensation, & without being removed by her ordinary washing of hands & face & drying with the ~~dry~~ towel. His decision accorded with her own impression; that it was an admonition to receive Catholic Baptism, with all the accustomed ceremonies & exorcisms.

Fr. C. administered the sacrament conditionally in due form: during which the recipient experienced all the sweet impressions, internal & external of the night previous—A strong belief in miracles,—concerning which until then, she had had some difficulty, & I think she said, an inward desire & appreciation of this regeneration by water & the Holy Ghost.

The note above copied was written & sent in the morning. In the afternoon she came over to see us. This was the time she & ~~with~~ two or three other ladies got in the windows, during Vespers. Her hands which we all felt,—were still sticky, but <sup>without</sup> any of the unpleasant feeling of stickiness, & without soiling in the least what they touched: & when held up to the light, showed a transparency, a kind of glow which I think I never saw elsewhere. She told us that when the negro girl brought the candle she exclaimed: "Oh Mistress! Your face is all shiney! & your hands too. Mrs. M's. impression at the moment & since was, that all who touched while this unction remained on her person, would be baptized: which proved true. And they were baptized exactly in the order in which they touched her. First her husband: then the negro girl; then the stage driver, etc, etc. I presume her brother-in-law Mr. Wm. Morrison, (his house was next door,) was one. He too died in the bosom of the Catholic Church.

Some months after this, Mr. Robt. Morrison was baptized in our little chapel (Father's house). Rev. F. Condamine & Mother Agnes were his sponsors. This was the first baptism in our little chapel. Mr. Wm. Morrison his brother was baptized on his death bed, about four years afterwards. During nearly the whole time of M. Agnes's



superiority, he used to come to her almost daily for instruction. She read & explained to him books of catholic doctrine, the sacraments, etc. to all which he listened with the utmost attention & interest. His wife & children all became Catholics.

In the summer of 1835, Bp. Rosatti being again in Kaskaskia, Mother Agnes spoke to him about selecting a spot for our future building; & he, accompanied by some others, went with her to see the lots proposed. The ground was fixed upon & purchased, Col. P. Menard advancing the money;- but the greatest difficulty was in procuring workmen & materials; no such things being found in Kaskaskia. We wrote on to Baltimore to Mr. Wheeler, nephew of the late Fr. Michael Wheeler, & son of the architect by whom the Convent in Georgetown was built in 1831. He came out west & undertook our business. First of all, in concert with Col. Menard, he had a brick yard gotten up in Kaskaskia; but as there was no demand for the article (except from ourselves) in this town where business was stagnant, a year, indeed I think two years elapsed ere a second kiln was ready for burning. Our house repeatedly came to a stand still--the workmen deserting etc. & when M. Agnes resigned her charge in May 1836 very little more than the foundations were laid.

Mr. Wheeler now proposed to begin a frame building, which should be contiguous to the one in brick already commenced: for being a carpenter, it would be in his power to carry on the latter, as he himself would remain on the spot & assist in the work, which he promised to have finished before autumn. The work now proceeded briskly; & in the summer vacation, about the last of August, 1837, we bade adieu to the old hotel & to Mather's house & removed to our new habitation. The building (two) stories, freshly painted with its green blinds & long piazza looked like a long steam boat, & lay at right angles with the somber foundation walls & cellar pit of the deserted brick structure.--I mean deserted by the workmen since 1835-- As soon as the lathing & plastering of the frame building was finished, the brick masons got again to work on the Academy which was roofed the same fall, so that the carpenters were able to work on the interior during the winter of 1837-8.



We had removed to our own premises about the feast of St. Augustine, or a little after; but had hardly gotten into our new Convent when a death occurred, that of a postulant followed by two other deaths; of Sr. Ambrosia Cooper, on October 2nd. & of Sr. Gonzaga Jones on Dec. 3rd. We were, as may be supposed very sad, especially as at that time Kaskaskia had no stationary pastor, Frs. Gendamine & Roux having returned to France & St. Louis. Yet some priest, either Lazarist or secular, gave us Mass & heard our confessions every week.

At this moment of gloom, providence sent us one great comfort in the presence of the saintly Bp. Brute who remained several weeks with us. As the parish priests' residence in town, was in so dilapidated a condition as to be scarcely habitable, the good Bp. accepted an apartment in our bakehouse, where some five or six little orphans lodged. This bake house was pretty comfortable in winter, having two rooms above & one below, defended on one side by a smoke house.

We were at this time all (children & sisters) crowded into one building, two or three children sleeping in each of the sisters cells: besides which, the play room had to be converted into a dormitory at night. The Chapel was at the end of the corridor: the altar over the fire place, & opposite the door looking down the passage.

During Mass, the sisters knelt in the cell doors; & at communion received at the chapel door, in which a chair was placed with a Communion Cloth across the back.

The children came to Mass only on Sundays & knelt at the lower end of the passage & on the stairs. It was to this little chapel the saintly Bp. Brute used to steal, & pass hours before the B. Sacrament. We often met him going along in silence & on tiptoe, without raising his eyes or stopping to speak to any one:—his breviary under his arm.  
(drawing in manuscript of frame building)

We were anxious to get into our Chapel before Christmas; & the workmen hurried to lay the floor & put up the lathing at the west end: all the other walls being of solid brick. But as no plastering could be attempted in this season, we hung up quilts, etc. to keep out the wind & cold: & the flooring overhead, helped to render it a little warmer. There being no brick layers about, I was given the job of laying the hearth—fire being indispensable. First filling up the cavity with sand, I put down the bricks in regular files, to the admiration of all who saw it, & to the joy of those who feared we would freeze there on Christmas night. Even with a fire in the large hearth it was



fearfully cold. During a considerable part of the months of January & February, we were obliged to move the altar up close to the fire, & directly in front: & even then, to keep the cruets on the hearth until needed at the altar; when the Sister sacristan put them in reach of the priest. We also kept a chafing dish on the altar.

Our Srs. suffered much from the cold during this winter & indeed during the eleven winters passed in Kaskaskia: but the old hotel was in this respect more comfortable than the new building. The convent, a frame house, was built of unseasoned lumber, weather-boarded without filling in. As the timber shrank, large gaps & crevices were left, through which the freezing wind gushed. We stuffed up many of these gaps with tow: but in rooms where this precaution was not taken, our feet ached with the cold. The music teachers were obliged to keep under the pianos where they gave lessons, boxes lined with buffalo skins in which to wrap the feet. Nearly all the sisters who had cloaks wore them all day long, or at least in the early hours of the morning; at meditation, Mass, & the office. Several also were obliged to make hoods & wear them.

Mr. C. Rose who was cook called us to look at pans on the fire, frozen on one side & stewing on the other. Several empty cups & pitchers broke from the cold alone. I myself, in attending a writing class, with two large fires in the room, one in the chimney place & one in the stove,—saw the ink freezing in the children's pens, & felt as if my feet would freeze off from the wind gushing under the wash boards. On some of the most intensely cold days we had to suspend school for it was as much as the children could do to keep themselves warm, hugging around the fire. In pouring out the coffee, if a drop fell upon the table, it would instantly freeze, though we had a stove in the room.

We did not pretend to keep water in our cells, for the pitchers would all have been burst. A lay Sister carried some around to each cell; or else a bucket full was placed before the fire in the assembly room (on the same floor) whither the sisters went, half dressed, to perform their ablutions; for all the vessels in their cells froze hard; so that it was necessary to take a poker or tongs to break the ice. I have seen basins setting under the stove from morning almost until night unthawed. Every morning our outer blankets,—(we took the spread off & folded it up,) would be covered with a thick white frost, from our frozen breath; & this frost would not disappear with the sun rise or noonday beam: but would generally lie white & crisp all day long.



In one respect however, we were better than at the old hotel. We had a better kitchen & pantry. In the former our bread was oftentimes in the most direful condition--frozen hard as a stone,--impervious to any sharp edged tool. I think I had seen them apply hatchets to it. The place in which they kept the bread was an outer north room, without a fire place, where the loaves would become congealed to the very centre. Adjoining was the procuratrix's cell, which served also as her office & music room. The poor procuratrix used to have the loaves brought in & ranged around the hearth of the franklin stove. But it took a long time to thaw them; & yet no one could eat the ice.

We used lard lamps with cotton flannel wicks, sperm oil having given out or become very dear. Gas & coal oil were not heard of until years later. These lard lamps were very inconvenient, & half the time totally unserviceable. Difficult to light, they would not burn unless the lard was reduced to a liquid state. We had to keep them by the fire before lighting & even after lighting; for if carried into a cold place they congealed & became extinguished. Then, to restore them to a burnable temperature was, in that cold climate, a process of some thirty minutes,--even under favorable circumstances; it being seldom that our apartments afforded heat sufficient to effect the ~~liquefaction~~ liquifaction in this space of time. Besides, the lard was expensive: & we generally used to save all for the sisters at night recreation, as they did in old times at Georgetown.

When in August 1837, we moved to our own premises we all lived in the east wing, the other not being even under roof. The Sisters put up an awning at the south end of the east piazza & used this as their refectory.--Our table was two boards tacked together & supported on two barrels; one at each end. But when the weather grew cool, one end of the kitchen served as our refectory. Mr. Wm. Morrison's black man, Ruben, was cook (& an excellent one he was, having served in this capacity on board a steamboat. He was a man of tall stature, & always behaved with the utmost dignity & propriety, serving at his post promptly & quietly, without ever appearing flurried by supernumerary demands. But when these were all dispatched he would stand with his hands behind his back, looking towards the reader & listening with absorbing attention to Rodriguez or any other treatise



on asceticism that was being read. After we had finished our meal, the children came & took theirs at the same table; for we had no other place to give them.

During the following winter the interior of the academy was finished, & in the spring the walls were plastered & the painting done. But although more comfortably & more monastically fixed, the health of the community was not as good as it had been at the old hotel. The situation was less salubrious. The sisters were nearly broken down with the intermittent chills which fastened on them with a fearful pertinacity. Once attacked it seemed impossible to get out of their grasp. Many became discouraged: & I have seen Mother Helen burst into tears when information was brought her of some ~~girl~~ new one stricken down & put to bed. In the vacation (which, fortunately was the sickly season) hardly were there sisters enough up to nurse those who were sick, & to fill the offices. And this routine of sickness was incessant & not of a light nature. I have seen three at a time in danger of death. In one summer some four or five received the last sacraments & two novices made their vows conditionally: but generally speaking they recovered, to be attacked again upon the least exposure. During these last seven years in Kaskaskia we buried three professed sisters; one novice, one postulant, one pupil & one orphan child. Also a holy secular man who remained on the premises with the gardener & gave us his services gratuitously.

#### Assistance received from Georgetown.

On leaving Georgetown in 1833 we were nine in number: Six of the black veil, one lay Sr. one out sister, & a postulant. The out sister returned after a few weeks stay. In the summer following we obtained of our mother house another lay Sister, Sr. Veronica, whom Col. F. Menard brought out west. There seemed to be no such thing as religious vocations in Kaskaskia, & we applied to Georgetown to give us another member much needed in our school. The Very Rev. Ph. Borgua went on to urge our request, & returned with Sr. M. Augustine Barber, Sr. Josephine's mother. She brought with her a lay postulant, (S<sup>r</sup>. Philomena Koubtot) with whom she had become acquainted in Cincinnati. Two other postulants, some months afterwards, followed from Cincinnati. They were Sr. Beatrice of the Srs. of Charity Tyler (the Sr. servant of the house) & Sr. De Chantal Brawner, who, making inquiries concerning our Order wished to join it.

Again in 1839 at our earnest entreaty for further assistance from Georgetown,



Sr. Seraphina Wickham volunteered her services & made the sacrifice, Sr. Jane Frances MB, another choir sister, & also an out sister came with her & entered her postulanship as a lay sister. They arrived in Kaskaskia about the middle of April; & on May 14th.

Sr. Seraphina was elected superior.

On Christmas day 1840 we had the grief of losing a most excellent servant, if so we may call him, for he was a gentleman, a merchant of St. Louis, who had voluntarily impoverished himself, giving all his property to the Church. He came to Kaskaskia, where he was not known, & worked as journeyman or partner to a catholic carpenter as pious as himself. Finally, he wished to live on our premises with the gardener, never charged us any thing for his work, & at his death left us all his effects & quite a good library of french books, for he was a frenchman. (Mr. Bouvet)

Whenever Bp. Rosatti came to Kaskaskia he made him sit at his table, & treated him with great respect. He used to serve Mass in our chapel every morning, & it was very edifying to see him. He was in St. Louis in <sup>bright beaming</sup> & was one of the thousands who saw the star over the church where lay the corpse of the saintly Father De Andreis in state. The star remained there until the body quitted the church for burial.

Mr. Bouvet requested to be buried under the gate way of the sisters' grave yard. What his humility prompted him to ask, our respect for the deceased required us to refuse. His grave was dug in one corner of our little cemetery, & on the morrow of Christmas his funeral service took place. The grave yard was situated in a remote part of the enclosure; & some of his friends climbed the fence & visited the grave. An alarm was soon given. Knocks were heard under ground, & quite a crowd of men collected on the ~~spot~~ spot. They attributed the raps to his not having been buried according to his request, under the gateway. Fr. B. Roux & one or two of the sisters went down to see & hear for themselves. On account of the deep & soft mud it was a matter of great difficulty to get to the cemetery. Father R. & the Srs. heard the knocks, & on account of the excitement judged it best to have the grave re-opened. Then was discovered the cause of what had happened. On account of water underneath, and the softness of the soil, the boards under the coffin had slipped or sunk; & as the corpse within, weighed upon the bottom of the coffin & pressed it down by jerks, these sounded like knocks, & were supposed to proceed from the lifeless tenant of the grave.



The Christmas of the following year, 1841, was still more sad. In the fall, one of our most robust & healthy sister, Sr. De Chantal Brawner, was taken with violent symptoms of cold or plury which in a few weeks changed into typhoid. So violent were her fever & delirium for nine weeks, that two of us had to remain by her night & day,—for she was a person of large & powerful frame. The community being small, our turns came frequently, & we were at last obliged to get the children to assist; for the sisters were nearly worn out with watching. Her delirium being continual, Fr. St. Cyr hesitated about giving her the last sacraments. At length, about three weeks before her death, as a disposition to vomit prevented her receiving the viaticum, he administered the Extreme Unction only. Her ~~agony~~ agony lasted several days: & on Christmas morning, after Mass, for we had only one,—she expired in presence of M. Seraphina & the community.

But this dreary Christmas was succeeded by some consolation. On the octave of the Epiphany we had the happiness of welcoming our newly consecrated Bishop. Coadjutor to Monsignor Rosatti, the latter having been sent as legate or vicar apostolic to Hayti. Bishop Kenrick immediately gave us a chaplain for our convent, & thenceforth we had the blessing of daily Mass.

We purchased a lot on the other side of the street for Fr. Heim & built him a comfortable house where he might entertain the Bishop when he should visit Kaskaskia; for the miserable town had not a place (except private houses) wherein to afford him proper accommodations: the tavern being too much a place of carousal & the parish presbytery in too dilapidated a condition. So ruinous was the old log church & sacristy that the priests sent us their best vestments for safe keeping: & on every Sunday & festival we had the vestments for the day carried to the church and brought back as soon as the service was over. One reason of this was that the church being full of crevices, especially under the roof, the pigeons had entered & built all around to the great annoyance of the congregation.

I have said there was only one street in Kaskaskia. This is literally true: but there had been other streets, —in the days when the town numbered 4,000, or as some ~~say~~ say 7,000 inhabitants. These streets were still marked out by fences, though there was scarcely one house on a block—where houses had been, gardens or pasture fields lay.

After Ep. Kenrick's visit there was a proposition for building a new church &



presbytery. At first they proposed erecting it on our land & contiguous to the Academy at the west end, in order that the sisters might take charge of the altar & sacristy, & that the one Mass might answer for the convent & parish congregation. But the distance for the latter to walk was an objection & a new brick church was built on the same site as the former. The new church was commenced, I think in 1842 or 3. The saintly pastor worked on it with his own hands: but his funds were small & slow in coming. He got it roofed in & floored before winter; & I believe spent all his leisure in aiding the one or two carpenters whom he could keep at the job. Finally he was, with the bare, unplastered walls & ceiling, obliged to use it for his congregation. And when in 1844 the flood swept over it, & he as well as Fr. Heim (our chaplain & confessor) was obliged to abandon Kaskaskia, the church remained unfinished. Twenty years later it was plastered, and the interior completed.

During this past summer or autumn, 1877--the two bells--one new, the other the worn out bell of the times of Louis XIV--have been hung, in a tower one hundred feet high, recently erected. Some account of this tower & bells will be found on pages 29

On May 12th. 1842, Sr. Agnes Brent was elected superior.

In 1843, a division of the diocese taking place, whereby Kaskaskia was placed under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Chicago, Bp. Kenrick expressed to Mother Agnes his desire of retaining some of the Visitation nuns in his diocese, & of establishing a house in St. Louis, requesting her to proceed thither & be its first superior.

Accordingly in the spring following accompanied by six sisters, she departed on her mission. It was April 14th. Low Sunday 1844. Accompanied by Maj. Graham & his two daughters, our pupils, we left after Mass & breakfast, & riding some thirty or forty minutes reached the banks of the Mississippi, where we waited for the passing of a boat. There was a comfortable house erected on the shore for the accommodation of arrivals & departures,-- & in this we had remained about half an hour, when the loud puffing of a steam boat was heard. Immediately Mr. Finn put up a signal; a flag on the end of a pole; & in a few minutes the boat put off steam & rounded to the shore. We got on board; & about ten or eleven o'clock the double doors between the Ladies & gentlemen's cabin being thrown open, a minister in his silk gown stood in the centre & began a most edifying discourse. All the passengers, ourselves included, sat around in perfect silence;



& maybe some thought we were almost converted, so attentive did we seem, not wishing to give offence. The preacher was a Campbellite; & we owed him some good will for speaking very reverently of the Mother of God: but he denied the existence of a Holy Ghost.

In six hours we reached St. Louis, & were conveyed to the City Hospital, where for eight days, the good Srs. of Charity lavished upon us every possible attention & kindness.

These were eight pleasant days,—almost days of retreat. We heard Mass & made our meditation in their beautiful little chapel; & had moreover the gratification of meeting our old Kaskaskia friend & Father, Rev. B. Roux, who again became our ordinary confessor.

On Monday we went to see our own house, I mean the one we rented on Sixth Street, which was being re-painted—& where grates & an altar were being built.

We moved into it some eight or ten days afterwards; but not having a single article of furniture, could not get settled until cupboards, tables, desks, benches, etc., were made & pianos, globes, maps & all school & kitchen utensils provided. We had not either any bedsteads; & had to sleep on the floor until they could be made to order. The Sisters of Charity lent us pillows etc., until ours could be provided. The following are the names of the Sisters of the foundation:

Mother Agnes Brent	Sr. M. Agatha Hussle
Sr. Beatrice Tyler	Sr. M. Magdelene Gremun
Sr. M. Augustine Barber	Sr. Benedicta Langan)
Sr. M. Josephine Barber	Sr. Margaret ) " " "

#### The Flood.

But let us return to our Sisters in Kaskaskia. At Easter, the time of our leaving, the Mississippi was already high & still rising. But as this rise occurred every spring, nothing serious was yet apprehended: In two weeks, however, the Okaw began to swell, & flood the fields lying between it & our garden. On the feast of St. Aloysius the garden was half covered with water, & our Srs. made their last procession in honor of the Sacred Heart on two of the upper walks which remained dry. That night the whole was inundated, & at 11 o'clock (Friday, June 21) the water rushed into the cellar. Next morning the well caved in during Mass. The greatest danger lay in the nature of the soil: for under the stratum of sand & clay, lay one of quick sand; & it was apprehended that the whole would sink in the mighty flood. Friends urged us to depart; & at 6 o'clock that same



evening Mr. Anede Menard brought a flat-boat propelled by stout rowers, & taking on board Mother Isabella & a good many sisters, conveyed them to his own dwelling on the bluffs east of the Okaw river. This was Saturday P.M. I suppose they had no Mass next morning, but Fr. St. Cyr said mass at the convent for those who remained; & immediately after breakfast they commenced packing up. ~~The~~ He dispensed with the Sunday obligation, and the Srs. spent the day in hard work, taking down pictures & every thing belonging to the altar & chapel where mass would never again be celebrated. They bundled & sewed all day long; covering carefully with cloths, their best pictures & ornaments. They were also obliged to remove provisions, kitchen utensils & furniture from the first floor, which although several feet above the ground would be entirely under water before night. At breakfast time the bricks in the kitchen sank when they stepped upon them. One end of the Sisters' refectory was under water; so that with all expedition they conveyed tables dishes, etc., to the assembly room on the next floor, where they passed the remainder of this memorable Sunday, at the close of which they too bade adieu to their doomed convent & sailed for the Bluffs.

Meantime Ep. Kenrick who had heard nothing of the distress of his nuns, was on his way to Kaskaskia to introduce to them their new bishop, Rt. Rev. W. Quarter. He was accompanied also by Rev. J. Timon & Rev. St. Pallor (both of them afterwards Bps.) But the meeting was of a very different description from what they had anticipated. They found the homeless sisters & children crowded together at the Menard mansion. Around which the houseless people of the town had taken refuge under tents & awnings. This was about noon on Monday. Old Col. P. Menard, the late proprietor of the mansion & devoted friend of the sisters had just been laid in his grave beneath the waltering waters. He had not lived to see the destruction of his beloved convent, which was his solicitude even in the last hours of his life. When informed on his sick bed of the rapid rise of the Mississippi & Okaw he inquired repeatedly: "How are the Sisters?" telling his sons to take care of them. Our convent had been, we may say, built up & maintained by him. In the purchase of the land, in the payment of the notes on the building, he promptly & cheerfully advanced the money whenever our means fell short; & this happen<sup>ed</sup>/too often. Neither did he for several years demand any interest: & when at last, he did, it was on the most indulgent terms.



He had a progeny of grandchildren & nieces for whose board & tuition he was responsible: & most of our pupils were obtained through his influence. God preserved to us our kind friend until a few days before the flood. He died June 1844. And his house became our refuge.

Our school at this time numbered fifty pupils, nearly all of whom were withdrawn by their friends. Only sixteen accompanied the sisters to St. Louis.

The arrival of the two (we may say four) Bishops in Kaskaskia was at a much needed moment, for the Menard family, I imagine, knew not what to do with the sisters and their sixteen children. Fr. Heim had gone in quest of a boat, but had not succeeded, no captain being willing to come to Kaskaskia. Fr. Timon now departed on the same errand; & hailing a steamboat on its way to St. Louis, induced the captain to put out his own cargo, & turn his boat into the Okaw river. Early on Wednesday morning, before day, the puffing of the steamer was heard at the Menard mansion. Mr. Amedie Menard sprang from his bed & ran out half dressed<sup>ed</sup> to warn the capt. against some dangerous spot in the channel; but was relieved of the necessity on seeing Fr. Timon standing aloft near the wheel, & directing the pilot.

After breakfast all got on board & sailed for the convent, of which only one half appeared above water. There a portion of the piazza balustrade was sawed off, & the boat lashed to the house through the doors & windows. The Bishops & priests assisted in carrying the furniture on board--pianos, harps, stoves, desks & benches etc., were put in the hold to serve as ballast, the sisters lifting whatever their strength would permit. By 2 o'clock in the afternoon they had gotten a sufficiency of freight on board; & bidding good bye to Kaskaskia & their long loved convent, they turned their course northward to St. Louis. This was June 26th. 1844.

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The place was visited thirty three years afterwards by a committee of the Missouri Historical Society; & from their report it appears that the dreadful Mississippi continues its ravages; not only desolating the poor town of Kaskaskia but threatening to sweep it out from the face of the earth. We will quote another portion of this Report as given in the St. Louis Republican.

Kaskaskia.



KASKASKIA.

From the St. Louis Republican. July 18, '77:

"A committee of the Missouri Historical Society returned yesterday morning from a visit to the ancient town of Kaskaskia in Illinois, one of the oldest French settlements in the Mississippi valley. The visit was made at the instance of the Rev. Fr. Doherty of this city, who inspired with the spirit of the antiquarian enquirer, desired to obtain photographic views of the ancient relics & remains which are fast disappearing & fading away under the ravaging hand of time.

"... Mr. Edmund Menard, a son of Col. Peter Menard, a gentleman highly respected for his intelligence & integrity, & who is a large owner of property, very fortunately happened to be in town, & to him the party were indebted for some reminiscences of the past. Mr. Menard resides over on the bluffs, & his elegant villa can be descried through the trees. He pointed out the remains of the old Convent of the Visitation, destroyed by the flood of 1844, situated in the northwest part of the village. The brick of the main building was used in building the Catholic pastor's residence. A small brick & a frame out building still remain standing.

"Mr. Henry Bienvenue son of Antoine Bienvenue told Mr. Menard that during the flood of 1784 he was a chunk of a boy & remembered the water only rose under the floor of the houses. In 1844 the water stood five feet above the floor.

"The boat which carried away the nuns steamed up back of the convent. Ep. Timon chartered the boat for the purpose.....Mr. Menard also pointed out the property owned by the Jesuits. In 1763 the French government having abolished the order in France, sold out their property in Kaskaskia at public sale. The town lot consisting of 240 acres was bought by J. Batiste St. Genne of Beauvais in France, who afterward sold it to Pierre Menard, in 1790. He also bought at the same time the French concession of 900 arpents, which had on it two water mills. Mr. E. Menard stated that his father, Col. Pierre Menard was born at Laprarie, Canada, & that his grandfather was wounded while fighting under Montgomery at Quebec.....

"One of the oldest & best preserved buildings is the Kaskaskia hotel. It was erected one hundred-& twenty-five years ago, & was occupied as a convent during four years. The house is sixty four feet long by thirty feet wide. It has a long portico in front. It was built of solid timber morticed together & bound with heavy plates of iron. The chamber is floored with heavy timber. A custom accounted for by the fact that the early inhabitants used the upper portion of their houses for a granary.

"The price for lots in Kaskaskia is about a dollar per front foot. A lot cornering on the principal street & the river bank, containing about an arpent, was bought for ten dollars."

Note: At the division of the Morrison estate, the property in Kaskaskia being reckoned valueless, was not at all taken into account.

"The Plain of Kaskaskia, formerly three miles wide, lies between the Okaw & the Mississippi. The Mississippi bank is about twenty five feet high & is giving way rapidly—hundreds of acres with corn-fields & large trees having fallen in during the past few years. The banks are an accumulation of sand & loam, made up of horizontal layers; & at the bottom there is a stratum of quicksand.



"Mr. Joseph Chenn, the proprietor of the ware house & also the owner of the land, had, a few years ago 225 acres; & now there are but 35 acres left, the balance having gone into the river: & the owner of the farm next above him has lost 400 acres by the same destructive process. But this is not the worst feature in these riparian changes. The Kaskaskia or Okaw river, which rises in Champaign County, in the eastern part of the state, runs, in a south west direction across the state to within a short distance of the Mississippi, when it makes a bend & takes a course eastwardly towards the bluff where the village of Kaskaskia stands; & then deflecting again along under the bluffs, enters the Mississippi near Chester, some seven miles below. Above the landing the Mississippi has encroached towards the Okaw, so that now the two rivers are only about two hundred yards apart: & the Okaw being some two feet lower than the Mississippi, there is good apprehension that the latter will break through, which would change its bed to the Okaw, devastating the bottom lands below & sweeping out of existence the entire town of Kaskaskia. The fears of the inhabitants have been aroused to the danger, & an effort is making to construct a dyke on the Mississippi so as to guard against the calamity."

Of an earlier visit to Kaskaskia the same Fr. Doherty thus speaks: "In the memoir of 1837 above cited it is stated that the plain in which Kaskaskia is built was three miles wide from the Mississippi to the Okaw river. Since that time the Mississippi has so eaten into the bank that now it is distant but a few hundred yards from the other river. I walked from the one to the other in five minutes. In a couple of years the Mississippi will plow into the Okaw channel & leave Kaskaskia a moist, sandy island that will gradually crumble & dissolve away, leaving not a mark behind. The knowledge of its doom has stifled every energy of the people of the little village.

"A large bell swinging from a low frame stands beside the church. It would be loss of time & labor to raise it to the spire which will soon sink in the muddy waters of our great river.

"It was drawing to night as I stood on the bank wearily waiting for the steamboat to come, when the Angelus bell rang out (not the old bell given by Louis XIV, which hangs mute in the spire, the clapper having worn through the sides) but that in the frame on the ground. It was the same sound, & it called to the same prayer today as it had called the soldiers & settlers & Catholic indians two hundred years ago. Sic Transit Mundus!

"So I left Kaskaskia sad, to think that it was doomed to find a grave beneath the waters of that mighty river on whose bank it once reigned a queen."

The Cape Girardeau Packet arrived in St. Louis at dawn on Thursday morning, June 27, & after unloading, returned to Kaskaskia for the balance of furniture which could not be brought up at the first trip.

The sisters & children were conveyed to our house on Sixth Street, which was now, of course, excessively crowded. They remained thus three days & four nights, not knowing what to do, when on Saturday morning Mrs. Thomas came & took six of them out to her newly enlarged residence in the country. Meantime Mrs. Ann Biddle offered the sisters & their pupils a home in her own family: but as their transfer to Chicago was in



contemplation, nothing was immediately decided upon. Bp. Quarter proposed that a few of them should go on to Chicago in order to prepare everything for the reception of the others, who should follow as soon as provision for their accommodation could be made. But this plan was objected to by Bp. Kenrick, inasmuch as the Bp. of Chicago was himself a stranger in his episcopal city, which he had not as yet even visited. The Sisters therefore, resolved to accept of Mrs. Biddle's hospitality; & early<sup>on</sup>/the following Monday carriages were sent to take them to her dwelling on Fifth Street, which was now transformed both into a school & convent. The house was very large; & all the apartments were given up to the use of the refugees excepting one only, her own bedroom; the servants being in a back building. She supplied their table & attended to their every want. Their meals were prepared by her own cook; two of our lay Srs. assisting.

On July 26th. the feast of her patroness, St. Ann, a general communion was offered for our Benefactress, & Bp. Kenrick celebrated Mass at her house for the same intention. Her back parlor served as the chapel: for she had besides, two front parlors. Mrs. B. treated the Commun<sup>ity</sup>/to a grand fete & everything was in sumptuous style.

Her kindness did not stop here. After harboring & entertain<sup>ing</sup> our 16 sisters & sixteen pupils for a whole month, she (during the summer vacation & before the opening of the first session of their school) installed them in her spacious & elegant mansion on Broadway, where the pupils enjoyed the advantage of extensive grounds, & beautiful walks & shades. Their school increasing they were necessitated to build a temporary<sup>two-story</sup>/structure containing two rooms, a dormitory & a play room; each about forty feet by twenty, with a flight of stairs leading from the one to the other. The lower room answered all purposes, as study hall, class room, wash room, etc. The Bp. advised them to build it, telling them he would take it at cost, which he did (\$200) & when they left, had it rolled over to St. Patricks Church to serve for the parish school. Mrs. Biddle charged the Srs. only a trivial rent for her mansion & premises, the payment of which, we believe was never exacted: so we may consider it a donation.

There were now two Houses of the Visitation in St. Louis: the first on Sixth Street, the second on Broadway. Of the latter Mother Isabella King was Superior. Her great solicitude & that of the community was to pay off the debt they had contracted in Kaskaskia.



The heirs of Col. P. Menard held our notes for seventeen thousand dollars yet due on the property, at five percent interest. We endeavored to sell the land & buildings at any sacrifice & had the sale announced in all the papers of the great eastern cities for a year. Several gentlemen came on to see the old convent (which it was proposed to convert into a factory) but found Kaskaskia too indolent a place for any such undertaking.

At length we made to the Menard heirs the following proposition. To pay down one third of the debt in ready money: to give another third in schooling; while the land & house were to go as the other third. This proposal was accepted & the debt which weighed so heavily on us discharged.

Two years after our removal to St. Louis it was judged expedient for the two communities to reunite in one, of which, as Mother Isabella's health was bad, Mother Agnes (Brent) should continue to hold the government until the expiration of her second triennial. Accordingly in July, 1846, the houses of Sixth Street & Broadway removed to the Archbishop's place on Ninth Street, where we remained twelve years, enjoying the great spiritual blessing of a close proximity to the Lazarist Fathers, who served us as Chaplains, Confessors & Spiritual Fathers during that time.

While there we erected extensive additions to the buildings which the Archbishop took in payment for the rent. Our convent was not yet completed when the time for our triennial elections arrived. Having no private chapel or choir in which to hold them, for we continued to occupy rooms in the Academy & were mixed up with the children, the deposition and election were deferred two weeks. Meantime we moved into our new convent--the altar etc. were transferred thither, & on June 19th. 1848 our beloved Sr. M. Genevieve King was elected Superior.

While the election was going on,--or rather, even before it had commenced, two gentlemen arrived from Mobile bringing a letter from Bp. Fortier, requesting our community to lend him some two or three members. The two gentlemen from the South had to remain in the parlor until election was over, when they were attended to.

About four weeks afterwards, the deposed Mother, Sr. M. Agnes Brent with three other sisters, Sr. M. Augustine Barber, Sr. Helen Flannigan & Sr. Cecelia Del Vecchio, left for Mobile. After remaining in the south four years, Mrs. Agnes & Helen returned. The other two died at our convent in Mobile.



The triennial of Mother Genevieve's government was a period of trials as well as of blessings. Severe sickness obliged us twice to break up school. But of this hereafter. In the spring of 1850 we had the consolation of a visit from the celebrated Fr. Theobald Matthew, & the consolation of going to confession to him. After finishing my confession, I asked him whether what we had heard of his having seen a soul in purgatory was true? "My child," said he, "it is better not to speak of these things." "Father," continued I, "if you will tell me, I will never mention it as long as you live." Thereupon he sighed so heavily, that I imagined the painful vision of the suffering soul was before him: & he answered: "Yes, it is true:" but said no more. He gave several of us the cord of St. Francis; & would have cured a lame postulant, at Mother Genevieve's entreaty; if she had had faith enough to throw away her crutch at his bidding. He crossed her lame side & knee with his blessed hand; making aspirations as he did so; but she, though born in Ireland, had not the vivid faith of hundreds of her countrymen who were cured by the same holy man.

Some time in 1852, Bp. Loras, (Father de Villars), on his way to Europe called at our convent. He had long desired to have a house of our order in his diocese & had <sup>times</sup> several/applied to us for a colony: but we were too few in numbers, particularly in teachers to afford an adequate supply. His business to Europe now, was to obtain members from the house of Monluel near Lyons, a most fervent & edifying Community.

Mother Isabella judged this a favorable opportunity for procuring some for ourselves. She had always entertained a warm affection & high esteem for the French Sisters whom she had known in Georgetown. They were models of perfect observance & of every religious virtue; & Mother Is. thought she could not ensure a greater blessing to her Com/<sup>munity</sup> than the presence & example of two or three such in its midst—she obtained Abp. Kenrick's consent & wrote to Paris by the Bishop of Dubuque. In June 1853 he returned with his own colony & two Sisters from the 1st. Monastery of Paris for us. The Monluel Company remained in our Community about two months to study english: & at their departure, about the middle of August, we lent them two/<sup>American</sup> sisters to assist in their school. The two Sisters from Paris, after staying with us a twelve month, left. Sr. Frances Gonzaga returned immediately to Paris; Sr. Augustine Borgia gave her services to the house of Keokuk for a year or more, after which she also returned to Paris.

Note:

Since writing the above, I am informed that it was not Bp. Loras, but one of his priests,



Fr. de Villars who went to Europe for the Srs. Fr. de V's uncle was at the time, & had been for many years, confessor & chaplain to the community of Monluel.

On the last day of the year 1854, we were shocked by the departure of one of our sisters, who had been professed thirteen years. We cannot say it was an event unexpected; for she had long had it in contemplation, & was several times on the point of carrying her project into execution but was prevented either by some impediment or dissuaded by the good advice of friends. This sister had a true vocation; but within the last year or two, had lost it. Never, or at least seldom have I seen a novice pass her novitiate (& many years after) in greater fervor & make her profession with more evident joy & self-sacrifice. She was a subject of joy and edification to the convent.--her zeal for perfect observance was such that she was made mistress of novices, & fulfilled her charge well for some time. At length gaining some reputation as a teacher, she became desirous of excelling, gave way to ambition & love of display, lost her taste for piety, formed intimacies with the pupils & contracted ideas altogether worldly.

On new year's eve her brother (a protestant) called to see her. It seems a previous understanding on the subject had existed between them. After conversing at the grate awhile, Sr. N. requested the portress, an out sister, to open the hall door as she wished to hand her brother a package. No sooner was the door unlocked than she went out, carrying the package with her down the stone steps of the front entrance. The Sister portress ran to her, & throwing her arms around her neck exclaimed: "My dear Sister, you cannot come out here!" Then her brother came up & said: "Sister, let her alone." The Out Sister spoke not a word, but went up the steps again & saw Sr. N. in her religious dress, get into the carriage & drive off with her brother & sister.

After remaining in the world nearly five months she desired to return to her convent home, & was readmitted in May 1855. Deeply penitent, she wished to humble herself & make reparation in every way. Her first fervor & her first vocation seemed to have returned. Our ecclesiastical superiors, however, judged proper that she should not be employed in the academy or have any communication with seculars; nor did she herself desire to have any.

In our house at Keokuk needing teachers, she was sent thither to assist in the school. Engaged in her old profession of music, her former emulation to excel was again



awakened, & she became entirely absorbed in her classes to the detriment of higher & more important duties. After spending (4 or 5) years in Keokuk she returned to St. Louis, but an altered person. Her modesty, reserve & love of prayer were changed to the contrary: & it was painful to see the alteration.

She did not attempt to conceal her desire of returning to the world; but openly made preparations for so doing. It was known both within & without the convent & by several of our protestant & catholic pupils, from whom it seems, she received presents for her worldly outfit, & by whom she also sent out packages of music etc. for future need. At length on the eve of St. Joseph's feast, 1863 she left us for the second and last time; not however, in her religious costume as before but in a worldly dress, & accompanied by her sister who brought a hack for her.

Some years afterwards she married, & started south, either on a bridal tour or perhaps to settle in California or Texas: but her husband died on the way, I think of cholera, & she returned to St. Louis.

The protestant pupil who assisted her in her second exit--conveying out packages, etc., came to an unhappy end.--Being on a visit to some friend or relative, she one day went into the pantry, & feeling hungry, ate a slice of bread & butter containing arsenic. It was poison for rats,--She died in a few hours.

But a motive of consolation was given between these two unhappy exits: exactly ten weeks after the first; that is on the feast of St. Gregory, Pope & Dr. 1855. Among the members of our Guardian Angel's Sodality were two little protestants, about thirteen or fourteen years of age. They were both good children, very guileless, & one of them (Hatty Edgar) (perhaps both, but I do not recollect) very devout to the Bd. Virgin. She had a tiny statue of the Madonna which she kept in her desk & always placed before her during studies. When singing in the choir at Benediction or otherwise, her eyes were generally observed uplifted to a picture of our Bd. Lady which hung near the organ. During the lent of this year, 1855, some of the children were permitted to assist in singing the Stabat at the end of Complin. She was one, having a fine alto voice: and it was remarked that she kept her eyes devoutly fixed upon the large crucifix that hung against the grate.



As soon as the Stabat was over she went to her piano practice, which was from 5 to 6. During the winter season, several of the pupils who suffered from weak eyes, were exempted from study by candle light. One of these, Anna Glasby, also a protestant, was allowed to accompany the former, as she was timid & afraid to remain alone after dark. But it was now spring, & day light from 5 to 6; & the permission for absence from studies had been recalled, although neither of our children knew of it, having been absent at the time of its announcement.

On the afternoon of March 12th Hatty had returned from the Stabat & was seated at the piano in the play room, when suddenly something bright appeared on one side: & looking up she perceived the figure of the Blessed Virgin with extended hands as represented on the "Miraculous Medal". She uttered an exclamation & called her companion who was at the window. The latter turned around & also saw the vision of the Immaculate Mother. Hatty always wore the medal, & had it then on her neck. Anna may have had it also; but I do not know. Both of the children were protestants & had older sisters in school. Hattie, knowing that her sister was practicing in a room on the same floor, wished to call her that she might participate in the blessing of beholding the Immaculate Mother. She had taken some steps on her way to the music room, when recollecting that it was forbidden the girls to enter one another's practice rooms, she turned around to retrace her steps: but the vision had disappeared. Yet its work had been accomplished in her soul, & its grace remained. Her heroic obedience on this occasion is a proof of her fidelity.

An account of what had happened was soon whispered about among the pupils, & a variety of comments made upon it both by catholics & protestants, many of whom viewed it in opposite lights, either as a heavenly favor or as the effect of imagination. The two children were of so guileless a character, that even had they desired it, they could not have invented & carried on an invention or duplicity of a far simpler kind.

The presiding sister immediately took the two children apart & interrogated them separately. Both gave exactly the same account & appeared to be under the same impression. She however told them to speak of it no more, as it gave rise to the expression of disagreeable opinions among their companions. Even some of the Sisters viewed the matter disfavorably.

The poor children were so absorbed with the thought of the Bd. Virgin, their hearts



so ravished with the sweetness her presence had imparted, that it became the occupant of their minds, the engrossing desire of their hearts— Oftentimes even in class their attention wandered, & they forgot to answer the question addressed—then it was said that a true vision of the Bd. Virgin would not cause a failure in duty, but on the contrary would render them more studious & attentive. These rigid censors had never themselves seen the Bd. Virgin or they would have better understood how these young hearts were smitten with her love. For over a week it was evidently their absorbing thought. Their countenances,—without words,—told it—and I do not think <sup>the</sup> impression was ever entirely effaced. One day in going along the hall & passing the stairway, I surprised Hattie on the landing, gazing intently on a statue of the Im. Conception, seen through the open folding doors of the dormitory, in the centre of which was a handsome altar. Hattie did not at first perceive me; but thinking herself alone, stood with her hands folded on her breast & her eyes uplifted to the statue. Her attitude & countenance I shall never forget. It was only a few days after the vision.

Both these children were my pupils in music; & my first information concerning what had happened was in the following way. At 9 o'clock next morning I went as usual to my music room to begin my lessons. Anna Glasby's was the first. I noticed that her eyes & cheeks were red & swelled from weeping, & that even then she was ready to burst into tears. I however said nothing but began her lesson. After a few minutes, Sr. Seraphina, the Directress entered & seated herself to her writing. Presently she said: "Sr. J., do you know Annie has seen the Bd. Virgin?" I thought the Directress was joking, or else making allusion to some blunder or simplicity of my pupil, & looked into the face of the latter for an explanation. But Anna was choking with her tears. Sr. S. then came over to the piano & began a series of interrogatories,—some ludicrous & some serious—for her object was to test the truth of the case, & to see whether the child's answers would be consistent & orthodox. "How was the B.V. dressed?—Did she wear a cap?" A veil? Did she speak? etc., etc., etc.

Anna answered in monosyllables; all the time trying to suppress her tears—What she said amounted to this: "That the Bd. Virgin, robed in white & blue, with extended hands & glory around her head, had been seen by herself and companion. I think she told us that rays emanated from her hands, but I am not certain. The glory around her head



grew, every moment, brighter. The white robe or veil (I forget which) was of a silvery radiance. I think she said the veil was blue. "But why did you weep?" said Sr. Seraphina. Anna had been crying all night, & her face was very much swelled. She was puzzled what to answer. Guessing her difficulty I helped her out. "You thought that not being a Catholic you were not a child of the Bd. Virgin: & this is what made you cry." "Yes," said she, "well," continued Sr. Seraphina, "I will ask the B. Virgin, if it was really she, to come again." At this a smile lit up the sorrowful countenance: for in her simplicity Anna no doubt believed that the <sup>B.</sup>V. would come if Sr. asked the favor.

That evening, on returning from the Stabat I found Hattie, the elder of the two, in my music room, & said: "Hattie, we missed your voice from the Stabat." She rose, & the color mounted to her cheeks. "Yes, Sister, Sr. Seraphina told me to remain here." "I am told you saw the Bd. Virgin: is that true?" Yes Sr., but I am forbidden to speak of it." & her cheeks again crimsoned. Her eyes, like Anna's were red from weeping. Of course, I put her no more questions then; but some eight or ten months afterwards I got permission of Mother Agnes to speak to her on the subject. Her first word of reply was: "Sister, I am forbidden to speak of it." Neither of the children was inclined to be communicative concerning the apparition; & always showed annoyance when others broached the subject in their presence. It was with difficulty we could extract any information from them. But when I assured Hattie that I had permission from Mother, she answered my questions, yet very briefly & with evident reluctance. Her account coincided with that given by her companion. "I am told", said I, "that the Bd. Virgin appeared to you twice, & that the second time she gave you a medal?" "No Sister: the girls reported that, but it is not true. I saw the B.V. only once." "Did she speak to you?" "No, she did not speak". "Did she not address herself inwardly to your heart?" "Yes, Sister." "And did you not comprehend her language, & what she wanted?" "Yes." I did not ask her what the B. Virgin said, but suppose it was an invitation to be her child & to enter the true church, which she did some time afterwards. She is now a good & fervent catholic & has also a good catholic husband.

Anna was not so fortunate. Her father withdrew her from school, & I never heard what became of her.



Fr. J. Rolando, at present Visiter of the Lazarists & Srs. of Charity—was at the time of this occurrence our chaplain & confessor & knew the two children in question. The Srs. gave him all the particulars as above stated & he told us he did not doubt of its being a true vision of the B. Virgin. I think he himself baptized Hattie in our chapel & admitted her to her first communion there.

I will not attempt to describe the "Know-Nothing" troubles, which for a time threatened the peace & even the safety of our city. It was apprehended that the churches & convents would be disturbed,—perhaps burned down, as some had been in Philadelphia. Bp. Kenrick sent the keys of his Cathedral to the Mayor. A guard was stationed around the college. & I think that some collision between the parties did actually take place. Two or three slugs were fired against our house one night, & one came into the dormitory & was found on the floor next morning. One of the shutters was also broken with a brick-bat or stone; but no further damage done.

#### Removal to Cass Avenue.

In the spring of 1853, having completed our new Academy on Cass Avenue, we removed for the third & last time:—to the lot bequeathed us by Mrs. Ann Biddle, the same lady who had befriended us in the flood of 1844.

#### The Civil War—1861

Notwithstanding that hostilities had commenced, our city remained tranquil until May, 1861. But it was an external tranquillity: hearts were heaving with excitement, & it was thought that St. Louis would become the center of bloody battle, as well on this account as of its midway position between the federal & secession states, & their respective army & naval forces, transported on the waters & tributaries of the Mississippi.

It was predicted that our streets would run with blood: But God averted this from us & turned the legions into another track. Our population was mostly of southern sympathizers. Militia were drilled for the south by Gen. Frost, under the U. States Flag & with the ostensible motive of preparing for any emergency.

On the afternoon of May 10, Maj. Graham (an ex-general of the Mexican war) called. He had three daughters & four granddaughters with us. Finding Sr. Seraphina the Directress, calm & cool as usual, he said to her in an agitated tone: "Sister, don't you know what has happened?" "No, Sir; I have heard of nothing." "Did you not see the troops pass?"



"No: Did they pass here?" "Not on this street but on the next." There was then only a vacant commons lying between. "You might have seen their bayonets glancing in the sunshine." "Gen. Lyon has marched them up from the arsenal; & unless Gen. Frost surrenders there will be a terrific battle in less than fifteen minutes." Maj. Graham then advised Sr. Seraphina to withdraw the children from the front & to close all the blinds & windows; that in case the militia should fly in this direction no one might be hurt or disturbed either by them or by their pursuers. We followed his recommendation, & kept the children in the basement & on the north side. They had no suspicion of our motive & no fear, though many had fathers, brothers & relatives at the camp.

Scarcely had Maj. Graham quitted the parlor when another secessionist gentleman came in breathless haste, saying he wished for instantaneous admittance, to go up to our observatory to reconnoiter. Great as were his impatience & hurry, turning & shaking the knob of the door, which was locked, Sr. S. hesitated to admit him. But he assured her he would go up very quietly, wishing only to survey the Camp Jackson ground, & see what would be the issue of the affray. There was not much bloodshed. Gen. Frost, aware that an attempt at resistance would be the slaughter of his men, too few in numbers, surrendered.

Frs. Lillas & Berry immediately repaired to the scene of action & on approaching the lines asked admittance to the wounded, at the same time showing that they were unarmed. But the soldiers scowled & pointed their weapons at them. There upon the two priests went around to another part of the encampment & addressed themselves to the federal officers, who not only admitted them with great civility, but allowed them freely to discharge the duties of their ministry. They heard the confessions of the dying & administered to them the last sacraments.

There was one poor man who lay speechless. Fr. Berry knelt down by his side, bent over him & taking his hand said: "My friend, if you are a catholic, squeeze my hand." He did so. Then Fr. gave him the last absolution,--A sad consolation for both. The scene appeared to have made a painful impression on Frs. Lillas & Berry, who were at the time our chaplains & confessors (to Srs. & children) & described it to us. Neither were they entirely screened from suspicion. A federal officer & attendants called at St. Bridgets Church, requesting they might be permitted to search the basement, having been informed that arms had been stowed away there. Fr. Lillas politely acceded, & went in



great haste to get the key; which, however, he could not find, either because the sexton was away or the key strayed. "But," said he to the soldiers, "break the lock: it is the only way you can do." "No," said the officer, "I am satisfied with your assurances. Besides, the lock is rusty, & is sufficient proof that the basement has not been opened for a length of time."

The Camp Jackson affray took place on Friday. No further cause of alarm occurred until Sunday, when about noon Mrs. Patterson called, saying she wished to withdraw her children as the city was in danger—would perhaps be sacked and burnt that night—"But," said Sr. S., "cannot the troops protect it?" "The troops are insubordinate. It is thought they will rebel. Many of them would rather fight for the south, & are unwilling to take up arms against their own citizens." "But do you think they would molest us?" "If the city is fired, you too, will be in danger. People are leaving as fast as they can; flying into the country. Every boat & every carriage is in requisition. I am now on my way out." Her children did not know why & whither they were going until seated in the carriage with her: for we wished to keep it secret from the rest.

Sr. Seraphina was filled with consternation. She went to Mother's room & told her what Mrs. P. had said. "I hope it is not true," replied M. Isabella. "Let us wait & see."

Later in the afternoon Mr. Slye, Sr. Genevieve's cousin, who boarded at the "Planters House", arrived, bringing with him a trunk of papers & valuables to deposit with us for safety. From this circumstance, it seems he considered us in less danger than those in the center of the city. We were then on the outskirts—our house standing almost alone—& very few even in sight, except a few shanties scattered on the commons. He confirmed all that Mrs. P. had said & told us that people were flying as fast as they could. He left his wife & infant child with us that night. We also sent for Mother Agatha's sister,

Miss Teresa Russle. Meantime the children perceived there was something astir but did not know what. Few of the Sisters, either, knew of the supposed danger: but Mother Isabella finally determined to inform them, that they might be incited to pray the more fervently. We were all at meditation after Benediction (it was Sunday) when she came to the choir door & said aloud: "Sisters, don't be frightened: but there is no doubt the city will be burnt down tonight."



Late in the evening, about dusk we sent for Mr. Keith whose three sisters were with us, & for another gentleman friend, telling them all we had heard & asking their advice. They replied it was true, there was great excitement in town & great mutual exasperation & animosity between the two parties. "But Sisters," they added, "You may remain quiet. We will go round the city & see how matters are. If there is any indication of danger we will return & inform you." With this assurance we put the children to bed, & they slept soundly: But not so with the sisters; several of whom remained up all night, watching for the lurid glow of flames which they expected to see bursting from some quarter of the city. Never, said the sisters, did they spend such a night. But morning dawned & all was quiet & safe. People returned to their homes & business, thinking that the moment of greatest peril was past. The next report was that the Dutch were going to poison the reservoir: yet few gave it credence. However on coming from Mass on the following Thursday morning, we were astounded to see an encampment on the heights. A regiment of soldiers, with their white tents & bayonets glistening, had been stationed there. Several cannon were also planted around. Alarmed at seeing the paraphernalia of war, & particularly the artillery, drawing up to our very doors, we wrote to Gen. Harney, then in command of the city, asking for an explanation. His answer completely allayed our fears. The troops were there for no purpose hostile to us, but rather for our protection should we need it; Gen. Boernstein should we find it necessary to call on him, would make it a pleasure to attend to us. Not long after this another cause for alarm occurred. Preparations were being made to plant an eighty-four pounder at the west end of the reservoir; for it was expected that the Confederate troops would enter the city in that direction: & as this point was elevated, commanding the river as well as a wide extent of country it was selected as the best for repelling their advance.

The citizens endeavored to prevent this measure from being carried out, but could not succeed. Then the Archbishop advised us to remove into the country:—"At least," said he, "all the delicate Sisters & those who are fearful must go; for in case the cannon is only tried, the concussion will shatter every window in the house; & the shock would be too great for them to bear. Some few must remain to take care of the place, & protect the property.



At this time,--it was about the beginning of vacation,--the work was begun--men were digging at the foundation, which required to be very strong & deep,--below the level of the street, to support so heavy a piece of ordnance,--& to be carried up as high as the top of Reservoir hill. This took time, & gave us leisure to make our preparations. Following the advice of competent friends, we had all the furniture removed from our chapel, parlors & oratories. Statues, pictures etc., were carried to the basement & laid flat down on the floor, that they might be less affected by the concussion. The Sisters intended in case of fire to take refuge in the cellar. Meantime the assistant, procuratrix & some others went out into the country to see whether the house proposed would be sufficiently spacious for our purpose, & what arrangements it would be necessary to make; & finding all according to their wishes, decided on removing.

The Abb. advised a delay, as the mounting of the eighty-four pounder would yet require considerable time. Smaller cannon were there; also the tents & regiment of soldiers: some of the cannon pointing this way. As the Srs. passing & repassing saw them, many said:

"Those cannon will never be fired. You'll see; Bd. Lady will never permit it. We were then making the Month of May, carrying the banner of the Im. Conception, & singing the litany in our daily processions around the garden: which devotions with many others, were offered with the special intention of averting the threatened danger. Mother Isabella gathered up all the medals of the Bd. Virgin & the Saints that could be found & caused hundreds of invocations to the S. Heart of Jesus etc. to be written on slips of paper & put over the door & window jambs, in the crevices of the fence-posts, & all around the enclosures. This was our wall of circumvallation: these our defences: but they were strong; & we confided in them.

True enough! the cannon was never fired: the eighty-four pounder not even put up. The city council, apprehensive that in using the latter the reservoir would be burst & the city deprived of water, prevailed upon the military authorities to change their plans. Tents, soldiers & cannon all disappeared from the reservoir.

The design of moving into the country was now abandoned; but we had very little expectation of a school, and during the summer vacation the Sisters were planning what they should do to employ & maintain themselves, especially as provisions had become very dear since the opening of the war. We thought of lowering our fare,--spoke of retrenching



tea & coffee etc. but the Abp. told us by no means to do so. "You have always," said he, "had the reputation of keeping a good table. If that once goes down, the reputation of the school will go with it; & this it will not be easy to reinstate." "You may," he continued, "have a larger school than ever you have had."

This was the first encouragement we received. About the close of vacation a german gentleman came to place his daughter with us. "But are you not afraid?" said the Directress. "Afraid of what?" "If the city should be attacked?" "In that case she would be safer here than at home." "I consider the protection of your convent the best that could be afforded." Scholars began to pour in; & during that session we reached the number of one hundred & sixty, the largest we have ever had. True enough, our house was under good protection; for we had the daughters & relatives of the leading men of both parties: the Confederate residents' two nieces, Com. Porter, Gen. Phelps's, Gen Sherman & Gen. Frost's daughters.

Of the latter I must relate an anecdote. One day two young Irishmen, pursued by soldiers who were drafting for the army, leapt our fence & rushed into the house, running the whole length of the basement passage, into the cellar beyond. As they passed the play room where the children were, these were much frightened; some screamed; some ran away; some clung to the sister: but little Mary Frost (now Mrs. ) without saying a word, fell upon her knees & joined her hands in fervent prayer. We were much amused as well as edified at her piety.

Two of the sisters followed the refugees into the cellar, & found them crouched down, trying to hide themselves, & quaking with fear. "Oh Sisters! Sisters! protect us," they exclaimed imploringly. "Yes, we will protect you: we will!" at the same time pointing out a spot where they might be better concealed in case the soldiers should look in the cellars windows. These last continued the pursuit; but as the two Irishmen, who had, all the morning been hidden in the woods adjoining our premises, had, on seeing the gleam of the bayonets, dodged them through the thicket, the soldiers missed their track, & thinking they had taken refuge through the front way, went thither. Our porter at the gate, assured them no one had passed there. The draughtsmen seemed distrustful: but were at length satisfied with the porter's renewed declaration that no one had entered the house or passed the gate, or could pass without his seeing it. This was all true: for they had gone in the back way, through the childrens' play ground. They were raw from



Ireland; & knowing nothing about either party did not wish to enlist on either side. Our men afterwards took them up to the stable, lodged them in the hay loft, gave them their dinner & supper; & they went away during the night.

Our school continued to increase; the dormitories became crowded, & we had to partition off, one of the passages of the academy & convert it into a sleeping apartment for the pupils. Nor did this suffice. The dormitory occupied by the Sisters was partitioned in two, & one half given to the children. Soon again this was filled: & we, not wishing to refuse patronage at a time when we contemplated building, surrendered up the whole & put our beds in every nook & corner. In the Assembly room, which was only a hall enclosed, were two beds curtained off. The hall being only ten feet wide necessitated our sitting in two pretty compact rows, both at recreation & at the night office, which on account of distance & difficulty of access to the choir, was in the winter always said here: & so small was the space that the chorister had to go up between the beds to recite her verse. These two lay ore. were generally in bed before the office was over. No unpleasant thing to be lulled to sleep by such devout strains!

Hitherto we had not had a convent proper; but had appropriated a portion of the Academy to the use of the community. The Archbishop now judged it advisable that we should build & on the feast of St. Michael 1863, laborers commenced digging the foundation of our future convent.

The following was an excessively cold winter. On the last day of December a heavy fall of snow accompanied by a strong N.W. wind, filled the streets with impassable drifts. Next morning our driver tried to get out with the carriage to go for the priest. Reaching the iron gate in front, he had to dig away the snow before he could open it. This done, a mountain of snow impeded his passage. After three unsuccessful attempts, he finally had to leave the carriage outside, being unable to turn it: unhitched the horse & brought it in: & we had to do without Mass that morning, New Year's day, as it was; the feast of the Circumcision, & the First Friday besides.

Fr. Berry at St. Bridget's, finding that he was not sent for, set out on foot, but did proceed far, being obliged to return home. As to ourselves at the convent, no less serious obstacles barred our way to the choir. The usual route blocked up, we relinquished all thought of going thither, at least before day light: but passing through the academy



went around to the children's chapel, & stood in the pews to chant Prime. We did not yet know of the failure with regard to sending for the priest: but after waiting awhile, Mother gave the tap & we all withdrew. The wind continued in a high gale all day, & we had no Benediction: not a sight of a priest all day.

Our carriage, with many others remained stalled in the street until a late hour.

The <sup>weather</sup> continuing very severe, Mother Vincentia told the sisters they might have a nap next morning. Fr. Walsh, our Chaplain & Confessor, seems to have taken alarm; for he wrote a note inquiring what was the matter & who had given us Mass. Mother replied that having begun the New Year so well, we were continuing it in the same style.

The next day was Sunday, & our carriage was sent, the streets having been cleared on Saturday. I do not think we ever experienced colder weather. Every thing was frozen like stone. Sr. Genevieve had in her cell (where there was a small stove) a bottle of holy water blessed on Easter Saturday. It held about a pint & a half; & on the label was a kind of a monogram of the Bd. Trinity. In freezing, a portion of the water was ejected from the bottle, as shown <sup>in</sup> the drawing; (drawing of bottle in manuscript) & the cork held tight at the end of the long icicle attached to the mass of ice within. We considered it quite a prodigy that the bottle did not break, being so hard frozen; & attributed it to the triple sign on the label & to the blessing & prayers of the church. It remained all day in the same state & did not thaw, though several times taken into warm apartments to be shown as a curiosity. After these two winters of discomfort & inconvenience, we had, in the summer of 1865, the consolation of moving into our new monastery. This took place on the feast of St. Aloysius, June 21:—and on August 17th Abp. Kenrick, at the close of the Annual Visit, (which was terminated that day,) blessed the house.

#### Note.

The church, dedicated to St. Fr. de Sales & St. J. Chantal had been blessed seven years previous, Oct. 27, 1858: The bell had been blessed or christened Aug. 21, 1858 & named Peter Richard after the Abp. who performed the ceremony & was one of the sponsors. Mrs. B. Able was the other. The tower was not built at that time & the bell was hung upon an immense pyramid-shaped frame, held together with heavy braces & screws—the whole about thirty feet high, placed against the piazza near the choir whence the bell rope could be reached. The Srs. used to call it the "Man of War". The tower in which it now hangs was erected with the new monastery in 1864-5.



DAY OF  
100 MILLION CHILDREN  
NATIONAL UNION QUEST  
EVERY

Please pray for Sister M Louise Gordon  
who turned 100 years



An article in <sup>an</sup> "St. Louis newspaper" <sup>undated and unnamed,</sup> at the time of Sister Mary Josephine Barber's death, is called "The First Novice: Death of an Historical Sister at the Visitation". Sister Mary Josephine Barber died at the Visitation Convent on Cass Avenue on Wednesday night at 11:00 o'clock. She had been a sufferer of cancer for two years. Her name is famous in the Annals of the Catholic Church of America and she herself had been for over a half century a member of the order. Her grandfather, Reverend Daniel Barber, a native of Connecticut, was a minister of the Episcopal Church, but became a convert to Catholicity. In 1807 he baptized Fanny Allen, daughter of General Ethan Allen, who is known in American Catholic history as "the first American nun." Her father, Reverend Virgil Horace Barber, was also an Episcopalian minister and he too was converted to Catholicity. He became a Jesuit, and his wife, Jerusha (sp?) Barber, became a Visitandine nun under the name of Sister Mary Augusta. Besides his son, Samuel Barber, joined the Jesuit Order. Four daughters became Ursuline nuns. They died in Canadian convents. Sister Mary Josephine, the Visitandine, was the last survivor of this religious family.

She was born in 1817 and was educated at the convent in Georgetown, D.C., where her mother was a nun. Except a little while that she spent beside the deathbed of her mother, Sister Mary Josephine was employed since 1844 as a teacher at the St. Louis convent. She excelled especially in poetry, music and painting. She had some of the most distinguished ladies in the country as pupils, among them Mrs. Hancock, wife of the late General Hancock. She was of most amiable disposition, very modest in speaking of herself. Two years ago she was induced to write a history of her family for the Catholic Memoirs of Vermont and